

Just the Facts...

Fact Sheet for Leaders: *Huffing and the Abuse of Inhalants*

Background: Inhalants are breathable chemical vapors that produce mind-altering effects on the user. Also known as *huffing* because of the way they are ingested, inhalants are typically abused with plastic bags, rags or pressurized containers. Street names for inhalants include: *poppers, snappers, bang, boppers and hippie crack*.

Types of Inhalants: Inhalants are typically split into four categories: *Solvents* (paint thinner, glue), *Gases* (butane lighters, propane, anesthetics), *Aerosols* (spray paint, hair spray) and *Nitrites* (amyl nitrate, butyl nitrate).

Products Abused: Products that are commonly abused include: compressed gas computer duster, rubber cement, hair spray, fabric protector, chloroform, paint thinner, correction fluid, toxic markers, lighter fluid, gasoline, octane booster, nitrous oxide and room deodorizer.

Effects: Inhalants can cause: chronic memory loss, emotional instability, slurred speech, body tremors, sight disorders, hearing loss, liver damage, kidney damage, bone marrow damage, paralysis, brain damage and *sudden sniffing death*.

Sudden Sniffing Death Syndrome (SSDS): Most commonly associated with *aerosols* and *gases*, SSDS is the occurrence of heart failure and death in inhalant abusers. SSDS can occur the first time inhalants are used, even when the user is healthy and in perfect shape.

Use Throughout the Army: According to the 2005 Department of Defense Survey of Health Related Behaviors Among Military Personnel, self-reported use of inhalants has significantly risen, with those surveyed reporting use over the last year rising from 1.3% in 2002 to 3.0% in 2005. In addition, recent Armed Forces Medical Examiner data shows that since 2003 there have been several deaths directly related to *huffing*, a number of these occurring in FY07.

Tips for Leaders: All leaders and Soldiers should be educated about the dangers of inhalant use. If someone you know is huffing, the best thing to do is remain calm and seek help. Agitation may cause the user to become violent, experience hallucinations or suffer heart problems that can cause sudden death. Make sure the room is well ventilated and call EMS. If the person is not breathing, administer CPR.

Signs of Abuse: The following are signs of inhalant abuse: drunk or disoriented appearance; paint (or other) stains on the face, hands or clothing; hidden empty spray paint or solvent containers; chemical-soaked rags or clothing; slurred speech; strong chemical odors on breath or clothing; nausea; loss of appetite; red or runny nose; sores or rash around the nose and mouth.

Additional Information: Additional information on *huffing* and inhalant abuse can be found by visiting your local Army Substance Abuse Program, the Army Center for Substance Abuse Programs (www.acsap.army.mil), the National Inhalant Prevention Coalition (www.inhalants.org) or the National Institute on Drug Abuse (<http://www.nida.nih.gov/>).

